



\$95,000 in Grants Awarded To Jackson-Area First Responders

Funds will be used to assist in bomb threat readiness

JACKSON, Miss. (July 26, 2011) – A total of \$95,000 has been awarded to Jackson-area first responders for purchasing equipment, training and other needs associated with bomb threat readiness. The grants were presented by the Mississippi Office of Homeland Security, on behalf of the Mississippi Department of Public Safety.

The City of Jackson bomb team, which is part of the Jackson Police Department, received \$50,000 for training and equipment. Jackson is one of only four cities in Mississippi with a bomb team, which is specially trained and equipped to respond to emergencies involving explosive devices or volatile materials.

The Jackson-Evers International Airport was approved for \$45,000 in funding to purchase a bomb containment unit. The equipment would be utilized to help remove a suspected Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and transport it to a safe location.

The grants are part of a \$200 million federal program being administered by the United States Department of Homeland Security. The program is intended to improve emergency management and preparedness capabilities at the state, local and community levels as part of a comprehensive national emergency management system.

“Homeland security begins with our local law enforcement and first responders, who are the first line in the country’s battle against terrorism,” said J.W. Ledbetter, Director of the Mississippi Office of Homeland Security. “These funds are used to enhance and improve our readiness for responding to a wide variety of threats and crises.

Added Ledbetter, “The upcoming 10th anniversary of 9/11 should remind us of all the potential situations that exist, and that we need to take efforts to ensure that we are prepared in the future”

Ledbetter said the United States Department of Homeland Security has directed state Homeland Security affiliates to use the funding to enhance existing capabilities within individual states for responding to acts of domestic and international terrorism, use of weapons of mass destruction and biochemical agents.

The Bomb Containment Unit contains a 6-foot tall drum of high impact, high strength steel and wheeled for easy mobility says Denson Stasher, the Jackson Municipal Airport Authority’s Director of Operations and Security. Stasher said ideally the unit would be located at or near the x-ray screening point, and will allow swift containment of a detected or suspected threat, and easily move it for examination and resolution

away from the public. He said the grant will allow the airport to move forward with the purchase of the equipment which has long been desired.

The funding will enable JMAA to purchase the equipment and provide the necessary training.

“This is a device that many major federal facilities and other high security facilities have on hand,” Stasher said. “It is a piece of equipment you hope you never need, but is critical to have if the need does arise.”

The grant program is part of a federal plan for ‘All-Hazard’ response planning, beginning at local levels. The aim is to improve response capabilities for catastrophic natural disasters, potential for weapons of mass destruction, acts of terrorism, and chemical/biological/radiological/nuclear/explosive incidents. The initiative also improves local response capabilities for traffic accidents, fires and other emergencies.

The Mississippi Office of Homeland Security, a division of the Mississippi Department of Public Safety, in fiscal year 2011 will distribute more than \$5.29 million in Homeland Security Grant Program funding in Mississippi for training and equipment.

For more information go to www.homelandsecurity.ms.gov